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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Yemen: Children under Fire**

Yemenis have been increasingly suffering as a result of the ongoing military operations led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, since March 2015. The escalating aggressive acts and practices have directly reflected on the lives of civilians, deprived them of their most basic essential needs and infringed many of their human rights.

The coalition continues to impose a comprehensive siege on all Yemen's entries, seaports and airports. Apart from their control and blockade over most of the seaports and airports, the coalition has also imposed tough restrictions on the entry of basic commodities, including humanitarian imports such as food and medicine.

Most airports are under the control of the Saudi-led coalition and they operate under their supervision. The rest of the airports, which are under the Houthis' authority, have been fully closed as Sanaa International Airport, where air traffic has been completely halted, since August 2016, although it is considered the main port of Yemen's air traffic, serving annually more than 8 million passengers. This closure has been regarded as a collective punishment against Yemenis, turned Yemen into a large prison and created an unspeakable humanitarian tragedy.

Further, the coalition forces have banned some journalists from entering Yemen and also prevented them from boarding the United Nations' plane, which limits the news coverage and imposes a media blackout. In May, the ban also extended to restrict the work of the human rights organisations.[1]

In August 2016, President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi issued a verdict to transfer Yemen's Central Bank from Sanaa; the capital, to Aden province, which is controlled by the coalition. Since then, the payment for public employees' salaries has been interrupted despite it was going on normally since the onset of the war against Yemen.

Since the very beginning of June 2018, the tragic scene in Yemen has been worsened due to the Saudi-led coalition's new military operations to control the coastal province of Hodeida; the only active maritime ports for imports and humanitarian aid to millions of people.

Certainly, children are the most affected category because of the conflict's continuation and the mounting of violence. The deteriorating humanitarian situation and the collapse of public services have deprived millions of children of adequate food and private health care. A large number of schoolchildren have not been able to complete their education and work instead to help their families provide daily maintenance. In addition, thousands of children are at risk of trafficking and joining armed groups.

According to UN indicators until June 2017, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has increased to 24.1 million out of 27.4 million; the total population. Nearly 90% of the population currently need humanitarian assistance to secure their basic needs of food, water, education, health and housing.

Approximately around 19 million people are in urgent need of food aid; 7 million among them are at risk of famine. This indicates a dramatic decline in the proportion of food insecure, raising the total number of people who are having difficulty accessing their food and having adequate meals.

According to Yemen's Humanitarian Response Plan 2017, more than 21.5 million people have lost access to basic health care, including 8.8 million people living in areas lacking the most basic health services in the absence of various medical supplies and aids.

The outbreak of the cholera epidemic in Yemen was officially announced in October 2016, and the epidemic has dreadfully spread in a number of Yemeni governorates. Up to February 2018, there were 16 million and 16,000 cases of which 2236 have died. Curiously, the incidence of diphtheria has been recently observed; as local organisations recorded 44 deaths.

The status quo in Yemen has become tragic in terms of the increasing number of children victims due to the acceleration of violence and conflicts. The number of child murders has dramatically increased, over the past two years, indicating that the Saudi-led coalition have violated the rules and principles of international law. According to statistics, 91% of the total children have been injured because of the coalition's air raids. Additionally, 5 of 6 children are dying per day and more than 5.4 million children are at risk of childhood diseases; amid the decline of healthcare, immunisation and nutrition services.

More than 10 million children suffer from serious psychological effects that negatively affect their thinking, feelings, behaviours, and relationships. More than 58.2% of children are very fearful, more than 37% are anxious, 36.4% are insecure and 32% 7% suffer from sleep problems due to fear of the sounds of explosions resulting from air raids, aircraft sounds and anti-aircraft, as well as fear of darkness as a result of the continuous power outages.

[1] Amnesty International report on Yemen 2017|2018.

International organisations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the European Union, have reported that the Saudi-led coalition is using high-risk weapons and ammunition against Yemen. Indeed, medical reports indicate that various Yemeni areas, which have been hit by cluster, phosphorous and vacuum would witness cases of malformations; significantly among embryos and newborns, especially in the capital Sanaa, Saada province, Hodeida and parts of the province of Taiz.

More than 4.5 million Yemeni children are deprived of their right to education. During the years of the military operations, which still ongoing to the moment of the writing this report, hundreds of schools and educational facilities have been destroyed. In addition, dozens of schools have been used to house the IDPs who have been forcibly displaced from their homes in more than one Yemeni region, leading to a dramatic deterioration in the education sector.

Recommendations

1. To immediately suspend all the Saudi-led coalition's operations in Yemen; to completely lift the blockade and to open airports and seaports.
2. To urge the Yemeni parties to stop all forms of conflict and engage in serious negotiations to ensure that Yemenis are spared the scourge of war.
3. To form an independent international commission in order to investigate all the committed atrocities and violations. These violations include the crimes practiced by the coalition against children and women and against detainees in secret prisons; such as systematic rape and torture.
4. To ensure that those who have committed serious crimes in Yemen and who are regarded as war criminals are referred to international courts. Further, to ensure that those criminals are held accountable in accordance with the relevant international rules and procedures.
5. To stop the large-scale of land, sea and air military operations, led by the coalition, to control the province of Hodeida, which is currently the only functioning seaport in Yemen. Obviously, the closure of Hodeida port would likely lead to starving millions of Yemenis who depend on this port for humanitarian assistance and the basic elements of life.
6. To activate the United Nations bodies and offices in Yemen, in order to carry out its role and assume responsibility regarding the humanitarian catastrophe suffered by the Yemenis for more than three years and continues to increase as to the moment of writing this report.

**Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR), NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.